TWO PRIZE ESSAYS

ON THE

DISUSE OF THE ATHANASIAN CREED

IN THE

SERVICES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

BY

CHARLES PEBODY,

AUTHOR OF "AUTHORS AT WORK;"

AND

COURTNEY STANHOPE KENNY, LL.B.,

FELLOW OF DOWNING COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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PREFACE.

In 1870, the fourth Report was published of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Rubrics, Orders, &c., of the United Church of England and Ireland, and the late Bishop of St. David's, Dr. Thirlwall, a member of the Commission, recorded his opinion, that those "who are offended by the Athanasian Creed have just and reasonable grounds of objection to it." It appeared to the learned Bishop that, "in adopting such a document, the Church has overstepped the bounds of its rightful authority in an uncharitable and mischievous way." Looking to the period when this innovation (of the Athanasian Creed) was first imposed on Christians, the Bishop observed, that we may find much excuse for its authors. But, viewed in the light of the fundamental principles of a Reformed Church, it appeared to him, "as forming part of our public services, indefensible."

Dr. Jeremie, at that time Dean of Lincoln, and a member of the Royal Commission, brought forward several arguments against the Rubric being retained which pre-

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scribes the use of the Athanasian Creed; and concluded with the remark that, "the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America, which has not only rejected the use of the Athanasian Creed in its public services, but has even omitted all reference to the creed itself in the 8th of the Articles of Religion, is not the less cordially acknowledged to be in full communion with the Church of England."

More recently, the book of Common Prayer has been revised by the Synod of the Irish Protestant Episcopal Church. In April, 1875, the third reading was carried in that body, of a bill for the adoption of selected verses of the Psalm "Quicunque vult," commonly called the Athanasian Creed; and by this measure the damnatory clauses of the Creed are left out in the Irish Protestant Episcopalian liturgy.

A large number of influential Irish Protestant Episcopalians, comprising the Earls of Enniskillen and Mountcashel, Lords Crofton and Dunalley, and many others, voted for the third reading. The Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin and two bishops opposed the change, but the Bishop of Killaloe (Dr. Fitzgerald) and seven other bishops supported the Bill. On the division lists there were in the House of Bishops 4 noes and 8 ayes.

In the House of Representatives of the Synod, without including the four tellers, the numbers were: Clergy, ayes,

125 ; noes, 61 : Laity, ayes, 196; noes, 25 ; showing a large majority of the representative members (321 to 86), in favour of the Bill for leaving out the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed.

A few months before this important decision of the Synod of the Protestant Episcopal Church of Ireland, a prize of £50 was offered by Mr. James Heywood, M.A., F.R.S., for the best essay "showing the expediency of an Address by the House of Commons to the Crown, in favour of such a Rubrical revision of the Services of the State Church, as will abrogate the threats of everlasting perdition to those of Her Majesty's subjects who do not agree with the doctrines contained in the Athanasian Creed."

Mr. Heywood placed the arrangements, with respect to the competition for the prize, in the hands of the Committee of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, by whom 167 essays were received in reply to an advertisement worded in the form just given.

The gentlemen who had been requested to determine which of the essays was the most meritorious, and the most calculated to serve by its publication the end which Mr. Heywood's offer (as indicated in the terms of the advertisement) had specially in view, were Mr. Henry Arthur Bright, M.A., and Mr. Lindsey Middleton Aspland, M.A., LL.D. The prior revision, however, of this unprecedentedly large number of literary works was entrusted

by the Committee of the Association to the Rev. Henry Ierson, M.A., who carefully examined, under the direction of the appointed judges, the whole of the essays, selecting twenty for their final decision. They agreed to recommend, as of almost equal merit, the two essays now published together; giving, however, the preference to the first; and a second prize of twenty-five pounds was thereupon provided by the contributions of several members of the Committee, and awarded to the second essay. Two other essays were marked with special approbation, and with the idea of placing the question before the public as presented from various points of view, it was intended to have added them to the present publication, had the consent of both the writers been obtained. It is much to be desired that these, as well as certain others of the essays, many of which are reported to display great ability, while some of them, in the opinion of the adjudicators, treat special aspects of the subject in a very striking manner, should be given to the world, as at least an evidence of the wide and deep and increasing interest felt in the movement for the disuse of the Athanasian Creed in the services of the Church of England.

Five years ago, when the Rubrical Commissioners repeatedly discussed the topic of the Athanasian Creed, a difference of opinion prevailed among them, with respect to the powers granted to their body by Royal authority to advise any important change of the Rubric affecting that

ancient formulary. If public opinion should sanction the nomination of a new Royal Commission, ample powers will be requisite to recommend to Her Majesty to authorize the necessary steps to be taken for such effectual reform in this particular as the true interests of our national religion demand, so that the law of the land shall no longer condemn a large proportion of Her Majesty's subjects to suffer under the unjust stigma of threats directed against them by official authority on the ground of an honest and legitimate difference of theological opinion.

DISUSE OF THE ATHANASIAN CREED:

A HISTORY AND AN ARGUMENT.

DISUSE OF

THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

The Athanasian Creed, as a topic of talk, has, till now, been confined to the Houses of Convocation, to the Church Congress, and to the Chapter-houses of our Cathedrals. Its origin—its history—its meaning—its use—have been topics of talk in the Jerusalem Chamber, in York, in Dublin, in every Chapter-house and Presbytery within the four seas, as long as most of us can recollect. More speeches have been delivered upon this Creed, more folios and more pamphlets published, than upon all the rest of the Creeds in use in the world. Yet, after all the talk and all the writing, we are apparently no nearer a solution of the questions in controversy than we were when Tillotson, Burnet, Stillingfleet, Tenison, and Fowler met in the Jerusalem Chamber, in 1689, to revise the Rubrics, under the authority of a Royal Commission, with the view of removing any obstacle that might be supposed to stand in the way of making the Church of England in fact what it once was—and may yet be again—the Church of the Nation.

That expression of one of the most distinguished Prelates who ever sat in the chair of Anselm, "I wish

we were well rid of the Creed," still represents the mind of the Primate of All England, still represents the mind of many of the Bishops, of more of the clergy—men eminent for their learning, their eloquence, and their piety—and of the great body of the laity. But how we are to be well rid of it is still as great a puzzle with those in authority in the Church as it was in the days of Tillotson and Sancroft. All our discussion ends in nothing. No one, except, perhaps, Archdeacon Denison, likes the Creed as it stands. No one, except Archdeacon Denison, reads the Creed in its plain, literal, and grammatical sense. We all use it, when we use it at all, with a gloss. But its antiquity seems to have invested it, in the eyes of the Houses of Convocation, if not of the mass of the clergy, with a charm which nothing else in the Prayer Book possesses—neither Creeds, Articles, nor Rubrics. Every possible compromise has been proposed —an Explanatory Note, a Re-translation, the Retention of the Creed without its damnatory clauses, its use only once a year, or, if it must be used four or five times in the year, that it shall then be used as a Canticle, as it was before the Reformation—and every compromise has been refused. Convocation, if left to itself, will not alter a comma of this theological war-song, not even in the damnatory clauses, although, if we may trust the authority of the Primate, not a soul in the Jerusalem Chamber takes these clauses in their plain and literal sense; and the Dean of Westminster asserts that, if he were called upon, according to the recommendation of the Dean of Norwich, to catechize children upon the Creed, the first thing he should have to tell them would be that the Lower House of Convocation had declared these terrible

clauses to be totally untrue.* All, therefore, that remains is for Parliament, as the Lay Synod of the Church, as the representative of the better mind of the Church, to take the matter into its own hands, and, by an Address to the Crown, ask for such a revision of the Rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer as will abrogate the threat of everlasting perdition to those of Her Majesty's subjects who do not agree with the doctrines contained in the Athanasian Creed.

And to do this we need only remove the Rubric which requires the Creed to be sung or read at Morning Prayer, instead of the Apostles' Creed, on Christmas day, the Epiphany, Saint Matthias, Easter day, Ascension day, Whit Sunday, Saint John Baptist, Saint James, Saint Bartholomew, Saint Matthew, Saint Simon and Saint Jude, Saint Andrew, and upon Trinity Sunday. The Athanasian Creed itself need not be touched. It may remain in the Prayer Book as it stands in the Roman Catholic Breviary, or as it stands in the Greek Book of Hours. Those who can use it in its literal sense or with mental reservations may use it still. Those who cannot and do not wish to use the Creed at all may pass it over as a relic of the Arian controversy. All I ask is that the Creed shall not be used, as it is used at present, in the public services of the Church, and that if it is to keep its place in the Church of England it shall hold exactly the same place there as it holds in the Greek Church and the Church of Rome.

That I venture to call a fair and reasonable compromise. It preserves the Creed as one of the theological documents of the Church of England. But it puts an

* Vide *Guardian*, May 7, 1872.

end to its use in those public services which ought, particularly in a National Church, to be free to all without offence to any. That principle has been recognized by the Legislature in the Public Worship Act in the case of Ritual. I propose that it shall now be applied to a Creed which, as it is used at present, is an insult to the Religion which first taught the human race the great lesson of universal charity. I do not propose to follow the example set by the American Church and to strike the Creed out of the Book of Common Prayer, or to obliterate all traces of it even in the Articles. There is much to be said in favour of that course. But the Athanasian Creed has a theological value and an historical interest of its own, and as long as the Church of England contains any who can accept the metaphysical doctrines of this Creed, and can find it in their hearts to consign to everlasting perdition those who do not see eye to eye with them in the mysteries of this Byzantine theology, I am quite content that they should have the Creed at hand in their manual of devotions. Its doctrines are in the main the doctrines not only of the Church of England but of the mass of Protestant Dissenters. But the Church of England is the only Church which, holding these doctrines, thinks it necessary to emphasize her own faith by proclaiming thirteen times a year, to the sound of sackbut, harp, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, that those who do not share this faith with her shall without doubt perish everlastingly. Luther held the faith of the Athanasian Creed as whole and undefiled as the Bishop of Lincoln or Archdeacon Denison, and, like them, believed it to be the strongest bulwark of the Nicene Creed. Calvin sent Servetus to the stake for doubting whether the Son was

of the same substance with the Father. But none of the Protestant Churches which owe their origin to Calvin and Luther now use the Athanasian Creed as it is used by ourselves, although still upholding, as stanchly as Calvin and Luther, the characteristic doctrines of the Creed. You may visit all the Protestant Churches of the Continent, from those in the remotest glens of Norway to those of the congregations which nestle in the crags of the Alps, without once hearing the, to us, well-known notes of the *Quicunque Vult*. This Creed is never used in the Reformed Churches of France or Switzerland, never in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, never in the Lutheran Churches of Prussia, Sweden, or Denmark. The only one of those Churches in which the use of it has any authority is the Lutheran Church of Prussia, in which, in 1829, a permission was given to use the Athanasian instead of the Apostles' Creed in any churches where the usage had lingered to that time.* But its use in Prussia is now as rare as it is in Moravia and Bohemia. The Creed is to be found in the Roman Missal and in the Book of Hours of the Greek Church. But you may be a regular and devout attendant at all the services of the Roman Catholic Church without hearing the Athanasian Creed three times in your life, and in the Horologium of the Holy Orthodox Oriental Church the Athanasian Creed lies like a withered flower between the leaves of a book. It is never used in the Greek Church, and the Roman Catholics are not required to take part in its recitation thirteen or even three times a year as the laity of the Church of England are.

The English Church is the only Church in Christendom

* *Vide* Dean of Westminster's speech in Convocation, May, 1872.

that still uses the Athanasian Creed in her public services; and even with us this general and public use of the Athanasian Creed is a modern revival. It has never been a popular Creed with us. Sixty years ago it was not read in ten parishes in the Diocese of Bath and Wells; and even in those Dioceses where it was more generally used it was heard only as an anthem on Trinity Sunday. It used to be sung on Salisbury Plain to a hunting song. It was not regularly said in London; and Bishop Blomfield could not recollect a single instance when it was used in Bishopsgate Church during the years he held the rectory. Even now, although the Rubric prescribes the use of the Creed thirteen times a year, there are many of the clergy who do not and will not obey the Rubric. Some refuse point-blank, pleading conscientious scruples. Some take no notice of the Rubric, and plead guilty to "a friendly want of memory." Others obey under protest, and explain the use of the damnatory clauses to themselves as best they can. Hardly any one uses these clauses or can use them *ex animo;* and if the question whether the Creed shall be used at all, so long as these clauses form part of it, were put to the vote to-morrow, I believe three-fifths of the clergy would vote for its discontinuance. There may be, and I believe there is, a small minority in favour of its use without a note, without reservations, and thirteen times a year; but this minority is, in comparison with those who desire to do something, infinitesimally small. "With regard to the Diocese with which I myself am connected," said Prebendary Kempe, in Convocation, "I do not know how many petitions have come from it; but neither Mr. Gibbs nor myself could produce more than four petitions in

favour of leaving things as they are.'* The laity, if polled, would probably vote almost to a man, as they did across St. George's Channel, for the abolition of the Creed, if the Creed cannot be used, like the Nicene Creed, without its anathemas. George the Third always closed his Prayer Book when the Athanasian Creed was read in the Chapel Royal. Bishop Lonsdale closed his mouth when the Athanasian Creed was said in his Cathedral. The late Sir Thomas Acland, the model of all that a country gentleman, a Conservative, and a Churchman should be, never allowed the Athanasian Creed to be read in his hearing without expressing his dissent so that the whole congregation might hear. And there is scarcely a Church where some of the congregation do not sit down or close their books when this theological Marseillaise is shouted in their ears. Archbishop Longley published a protest against its public use before his consecration; and Archbishop Tait has published a protest against its use since his consecration.

A Creed which has been condemned as an outrage on Christian charity by Primates like Tillotson, Longley, and Tait, a Creed which many of the clergy refuse to recite, and which even those who do recite do not and cannot recite without reservations, explanations, equivocations, and *doubles entendres*, stands condemned, or ought to stand condemned, in itself; and the apology that is generally made for its use, that no one uses it or thinks of using it in the sense in which it was used by its authors, only makes the use of the Creed, to me, the worse. I have no wish to characterize this apology. It speaks for itself. But without this apology the irony of the situation would

* Vide *Guardian*, May, 1872.

not be complete. "When those who take upon themselves to define mysteries which are indefinable—to set up these definitions as the Catholic Faith—and to heap anathemas upon all those who cannot comprehend their definitions, or, comprehending, do not accept them—admit that they do not themselves keep this Faith whole and undefiled, and that they do not believe in a syllable of their own anathemas, I do not think I shall go far wrong if I call the public use of the Athanasian Creed an anachronism. Perhaps I might go further and call this use of one of the symbols of our Religion a scandal. But it is not necessary; for strong words can add nothing to the strength of the case against the Athanasian Creed.

The severest censure that can be passed upon the Athanasian Creed is passed by those who, upholding its use in the services of the Church, propose to use it with a Note of Explanation, instead of using it, as it is used at present, with a series of mental reservations. A Creed which can only be used in public with a Note of Explanation is not a Creed to be used in public at all. A Note of Explanation is in itself a satire upon a Creed, for the very conception of a Creed is that it shall be a distinct, definite, and transparent explanation of the articles of belief which a Church requires its members to receive and to believe *ex animo*, and perhaps no Creed ever stood less in need of a Note of Explanation than the Creed of St. Athanasius. That Creed deals with some of the profoundest mysteries of our faith, and it deals with these mysteries in a metaphysical spirit. But the doctrinal parts of the Athanasian Creed must stand or fall by themselves. These are not the parts of the Creed that any one proposes to touch. The parts of the

Creed which the Royal Commissioners of 1689 proposed to explain, and which the Royal Commissioners of 1870 are still proposing to explain, are the damnatory clauses; and the damnatory clauses are the parts which least of all stand in need of explanation. These clauses are distinct, definite, and transparent as words can make them. There is no mystery about them. They will bear no gloss. If words are to be read in their literal, grammatical sense, these clauses require that those who would be saved shall think of the Trinity as the Trinity is defined in this Creed—make this Creed the standard of all Christian faith—insist upon its acceptance in perfect good faith, without equivocation or reservation, as a necessity of salvation, and consign to everlasting damnation those who fail to keep this faith whole and undefiled. What possible explanation can words like these bear? To say, as the Royal Commissioners of 1689 proposed to say, that the damnatory clauses are to be understood as relating only to those who obstinately deny the substance of the Christian faith, is to say that the words in the Creed are not to be read in their natural sense, that we are not to interpret them by the rules of grammar, and that the authors of the Athanasian Creed, instead of using plain words in a plain sense, used plain words in a metaphysical sense, and that this Creed was published, not to express but to conceal the thoughts of those who took upon themselves to define the conditions of salvation. And read in the light of this explanation, the Athanasian Creed is not a Creed at all. It is a conundrum.

Yet this Note of Explanation contains the essence of every Note of Explanation that has since been proposed,

the essence of the Note of the Royal Commission of 1870, that the condemnations of the Creed are to be no otherwise understood than as a solemn warning of the peril of those who wilfully reject the Catholic faith; the essence of the Note of the Oxford Professors of Theology, that nothing in this Creed is to be understood as condemning those who, by involuntary ignorance or invincible prejudice, are prevented from accepting the faith therein declared; the essence of Lord Stanhope's Note, of the Bishop of Winchester's, and of every other Note that I have yet seen proposed. These explanations all have one characteristic in common: they all contradict the Creed, and there is not a single explanation which does not in its turn need explaining quite as much as the Athanasian Creed. What, for example, is the substance of the "Christian faith?" The Christian faith as it was held by the Royal Commissioners of 1689, the Christian faith as it is set forth in the Athanasian Creed, in the Apostles' Creed, or in the Nicene Creed? The Nicene Creed is the Creed of the English Church, and the rule of the English Church is that the Nicene Creed contains all that is necessary to salvation. A Church can have but one Creed, and if the Nicene Creed contains the substance of the Christian faith, as the Christian faith was recognized by the general councils to whose authority the English Church professes to bow, what is the meaning of these anathemas in a supplementary Creed, which, in many particulars, goes beyond the Definition of the Faith as settled in the Council of Nicæa, in the Council of Ephesus, in the Council of Constantinople, and in the Council of Chalcedon, and which, as it stands at present,

is, to the mass of English congregations, an incomprehensible mystery?

The central idea of the Athanasian Creed is that error is heresy, that heresy is mortal sin, and that those who do not accept every theological proposition the Creed contains ought to perish, and will perish, everlastingly. That was the conviction of the men by whom the Creed was compiled, and that till 1689 was the idea of those who used it, if, in using it, they ever gave its meaning a second thought. The Royal Commissioners of 1689 did their best to take the sting out of the anathemas. But the Note of the Royal Commission of 1689 only tends, like that of 1870, to make the obscure still more obscure. What is wilful rejection of the Christian faith? What is obstinate denial? What constitutes invincible prejudice? How far does the will enter into belief? And, how far is man, with his perplexed and puzzled intellect, groping after light in darkness, responsible for involuntary error upon metaphysical matters which have confounded the intellect of the most distinguished of our species? Is error heresy, and is heresy mortal sin? And if they be, has the Church authority to consign those who sin, voluntarily or involuntarily, to everlasting perdition?

These questions all lead us deep into the metaphysics of belief. But when we have explained the explanations we shall still have to come back to the old question, whether, upon any hypothesis, this Creed is a Creed to be retained in the Church—that is to say, whether, considering the agreement to which all Churches have now come, to hold the truth in charity, it is wise, prudent, or charitable, to attach anathemas to an exposition of

what we believe to be the truth which is distinguished above all the rest of the expositions of the English Church by the subtlety of its distinctions and by its spirit of paradox, and especially whether, upon matters where Scripture is silent, we have any right, upon the mere *ipse dixit* of a metaphysician whose name we do not even know, to consign a single soul to perdition, much less the Greek Church, with its millions of worshippers, and every Church at home, which, like the Greek Church, does not hold the doctrine of the Double Procession as it is set forth in the Athanasian Creed.

It is said sometimes, although not often perhaps out of Convocation, that we have a right to use these anathemas, because if every doctrine of the Athanasian Creed is not to be found in Scripture in the form in which it stands in this Creed, yet these doctrines can be logically deduced from Scripture. This argument is founded on the 8th Article of our Religion. But all that it seems to me to prove is the assertion of Luther that every man carries a Pope in his own breast, and that every one of us, as well as every Church, has a right to anathematize every man and every Church refusing to accept any theological proposition which, by a strictly logical process, we can deduce from the words of Scripture. That, undoubtedly, was the conviction upon which every Church and every sect acted at the time when the Athanasian Creed was compiled and brought into use. The Western Church anathematized the Eastern Church. The Eastern Church anathematized the Western Church. The Bishop of Rome hurled anathemas at the Bishop of Milan; and the Bishop of Milan returned the compliment in kind. And that was the case everywhere. All

the Bishops of the See of Alexandria were at one time under sentence of excommunication except "three ignorant heretics," and these were repenting their heresy in the Syrian deserts. Every bishop, upon his consecration, sent round an independent confession of his faith—Arian, semi-Arian, Athanasian, or Anomean; and, with the Bishop of Rome, asserting the co-equal and coeval dignity of the Son with the Father, the Bishop of Alexandria was denying the similarity of the substance of the Father with the Son, and the Bishop of Constantinople, in the temple of St. Sophia, was denying the similitude of the Son to the Father. The streets of Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople ran with blood upon the installation of rival bishops; and while Homoousians, holding the Son to be of the *same* substance as the Father, tortured and racked Homoiousians in one diocese because they could only bring themselves to believe that the Son was of *similar* substance with the Father, ordered their books to be burned, and those who concealed them to be put to death, Homoiousians, in another diocese, cut out the tongues of Homoousians, in order to suppress a heresy which could only be distinguished from their own faith by the refinements of the Greek language, each sect in turn insisting, whenever it happened to be in power, upon nothing less than complete unity, not merely of expression, but of mental conception. The stake has in all ages and everywhere been the standard of faith—the faggot the final test of truth. "We all hold," as Sir Thomas Browne said long ago, "that there is a number of elect, and many to be saved; yet, take our opinions together, and, from the confusion thereof, there will be no such thing as salva-

tion, nor shall any one be saved; for first the Church of Rome condemneth us; we likewise them; the Sub-reformists and Sectaries sentence the doctrine of our Church as dammable; the Atomist or Familist reprobates all these; and all these them again. Thus, whilst the mercies of God do promise us heaven . . . . . we go to heaven against each other's wills, conceits, and opinions, and, with as much uncharity as ignorance, do err, I fear, in points not only of our own but one another's salvation."

But this was not the spirit of the Reformer and Martyr who, when discussing the doctrine of Election, said, "Sir, in this matter I am so fearful, that I dare not go further than Holy Scripture does, as it were, lead me by the hand." Yet the doctrine of Election can be as clearly proved by warrant of Holy Scripture as the doctrine of the Double Procession. Are Calvinists, therefore, to be allowed to set up the doctrine of Election as an Article of faith, to be thoroughly received and believed, on peril of everlasting perdition? Or, take the doctrine of Transubstantiation. That doctrine is not without its warrant in Holy Scripture. Are Catholics, therefore, to be allowed to impose Transubstantiation upon us as an Article of Faith, which we are to keep whole and undefiled, or to perish everlastingly? Luther found most certain warrants in Holy Scripture for the doctrine of Consubstantiation, and that doctrine is still held by a large proportion of Christians. Is that also to be made an Article of Faith? If we look at the nature of things, instead of looking at the accidents of theological controversy, there is no more reason why the doctrine of the Trinity should be selected as a test doctrine, should be thrown into the form of a

series of paradoxes, set in a framework of rhetoric and anathemas, and pressed upon the consciences of those who would be saved as a doctrine to be held whole and undefiled, than there is why Consubstantiation, Transubstantiation, Predestination, or Free-will, should be elevated to this distinction. Probably, if all the Christian Churches were polled to-morrow upon the question, we should find that in the opinion of the majority there is less reason ; for, if we consider how few people understand the doctrine of the Trinity, or ever have understood it, "how contrary to human reason it seems," as Jeremy Taylor long ago pointed out when protesting against the Athanasian Creed, as we are protesting still, "how little Scripture says of these curiosities of explication," how those who hold the divinity of our Saviour most firmly are themselves ready to confess the unintelligible character of the distinctions used in affirming it, how even an all-accomplished theologian like Canon Liddon admits that the definitions of the Athanasian Creed must be received with "considerable intellectual caution," and how conflicting the tradition of the Church is, this is, I believe, the last doctrine in the Bible that Christians themselves would have selected as the basis of a Creed, if it had not been selected for them by Athanasius or Augustine, or St. Hilary of Arles. "He that goes about to speak of and to understand the mysterious Trinity, and does it by words and names of man's invention, or by such, which signify contingently," said Bishop Taylor, in his famous sermon to the University of Dublin, "may amuse himself, and find his understanding will be like St. Peter's upon Mount Tabor at the transfiguration—he may build three tabernacles in his head, and talk

something, but he knows not what." I do not quote this observation against the doctrine of the Trinity set forth in the Athanasian Creed. I do not deal with the doctrine at all: that must stand or fall by itself. It is a question of metaphysical theology. I merely quote one of the greatest divines of the English Church to show that the English Church, in making these curiosities of explication and minute particularities Articles of Faith, travels beyond the authority of a Church, and beyond the authority of Scripture. It has been well said by a bishop of our own time, distinguished as much by his learning and powers of thought as Jeremy Taylor, I mean Dr. Thirlwall, the late Bishop of St. David's,* that the more profoundly mysterious is the subject of a proposition to be proved from Holy Writ, the greater is the likelihood that it will be found possible to prove, by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture, two propositions which are in direct conflict one with the other, and Warburton, with, perhaps, the same thought in his mind, said wisely and well long ago, that the obscurities of Scripture are a sufficient evidence that the subject of them can never be matter of faith necessary to salvation. Yet in the Creed of St. Athanasius one of the greatest obscurities of Scripture has been made an article of faith, and if all the rest of the Churches—the Greek Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Wesleyan Methodists, the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, the Independents, the Baptists, and the Unitarians, were to imitate the Church of England, cast their peculiar doctrines into the form of a Creed, set that Creed as the Athanasian Creed is set,

* Vide *Guardian*, February 14, 1872.

and recite it thirteen times a year, the religious services of England would take the form of a chorus of curses, and Parsees and Hindoos visiting us might repeat with fresh point the old Pagan observation, "How these Christians love one another!"

There are two courses open to us, and only two, I believe, if we are to deal frankly with ourselves—either to strike the damnatory clauses out of the Creed, or to strike the Creed itself out of the services of the Church, allowing it to take its place in future among the Articles. Of these two courses, I prefer the second, because, although if the Creed is to be continued in public use, I should like to see it used without clauses which no one can use without equivocation, I have no more wish to see the Athanasian Creed marred and mutilated than I have to see any other work of art with the history and associations of this Creed marred and mutilated in order to make it fit in with our conceptions of what it ought originally to have been.

The Athanasian Creed is what it is, and what it is it must remain, if it is to be the Athanasian Creed. It stands among the rest of the Creeds like the nameless statue on the Palatine Hill. Who wrote it, or how it came into use, no one knows. It may be the oldest Creed in the world, or it may be the latest. It may be the work of St. Augustine. It may be the work of St. Hilary of Arles. It may be a forgery of Paulinus, in order to complete the separation of the See of Rome and the See of Constantinople. Or it may be the work of the Council of Toledo. The Patriarchs of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch originally allowed it a place in their Book of Hours because they believed it to

be the work of St. Athanasius, and that is the assumption upon which we still use it ourselves; but the Greek of the Athanasian Creed is not the Greek of Athanasius, and the only point about the origin of the Athanasian Creed upon which all the world is now agreed is that, whoever else may be its author, it cannot possibly be the composition of the great Doctor of the East. But the Athanasian Creed photographs, and photographs in a characteristic spirit, the state of mind which prevailed all through Europe for three centuries, historically still the most interesting centuries in the history of Christianity, when, with the Temple of Jupiter rearing its lofty fane on the crest of the Capitoline Hill, the Christians had to confront, as best they could, the priest of Cybele at Antioch, and the priests of Serapis at Alexandria, when every grove and fountain had its shrine, every village and every garden its deity, and when even those who embraced the religion of the Galilean trembled at their own apostasy; and it sums up—to condemn—most of the heresies that troubled the Church in those times, the Arian heresy, the Apollinarian heresy, the Nestorian heresy, the Eutychian heresy, and the Sabellian heresy, although its condemnations are apparently so little understood, that, if we may take the word of the late Bishop of St. David's, "there is at this moment in the Church of England a very large amount of heresy, quite latent and involuntary, and without the consciousness of those who are affected by it, but still not the less real—pernicious Apollinarian and Eutychian heresy, and this heresy is most rife among the most enthusiastic admirers of the Athanasian Creed, and those who contend most earnestly for its continued use in the

public services of the Church."* It takes us back to a time when, although the Church held heresy to be the deadliest of sins, and was in every diocese for uniformity of faith in thought as well as in word, new creeds were struck upon the death of a sovereign as new coins are struck now, when a creed bearing the image and superscription of Constans to-day, bore the image and superscription of Constantine yesterday, and might bear the image and superscription of Valentinian or Theodosius to-morrow; when, in one reign, Africa and Italy had to take their views of the mysteries of the Godhead from the camp of a Roman general; and when in another reign the whole Roman world was ordered to believe the one divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of majesty co-equal, in the Holy Trinity, upon the authority, as Dean Milman puts it, of two feeble boys and a rude Spanish soldier; when the greater part of the Christian world was in arms about a metaphysical particle, and when the Eastern and Western Churches were divided by a diphthong which concealed a shadow of thought so subtle and apparently imperceptible that the Latin language did not furnish a term sufficiently fine to express it for the information of those numerous Western prelates who could not distinguish Greek from the hieroglyphics of Egypt; to a time when Arians in defence of their views cut out the tongues of Catholics, and Catholics in defence of their views roasted Arians at slow fires, and when Arians, split up in their turn into a dozen factions, separated by metaphysical differences upon speculative points of theology, were hardly to be distinguished in the savagery of their

* Speech in Convocation, February, 1872.

passions from the hordes of Alaric. The Athanasian Creed may thus, as Dr. Barry puts it, be said to represent "the flower and quintessence of ancient theology," and in the opinion of many theologians it is still, independently of its origin and associations, one of the greatest masterpieces of Christian theology, "the most concise, the most perfect and the most complete exposition of the Christian Faith which has ever been put forth." It has been in use in these islands for three hundred years under the authority of the Reformers, and it was probably in use here for seven hundred years before the Reformation under the authority of the Church of Rome. Antiquity, of course, can add nothing to the authority of anathemas which revolt every religious mind; but antiquity like this should, I think, make us pause before we attempt to make a Creed with this history and with these associations an expression of our ideas and our spirit, and, of course, in attempting to do this, destroy every mark which makes the Athanasian Creed worth preserving at all as one of the heirlooms of Christianity.

But every argument in favour of the retention of the Athanasian Creed among the Articles of the Church is an argument against its use in the services of the Church. A series of subtle distinctions, representing the mind of the Christian Church at a time when men were speculating deeply upon the mysteries of our faith, may fitly be placed among the Articles of Religion for the use of those who still wish to reflect upon these mysteries, and to know with precision what the Church thinks or once thought upon such matters, when this, and such-like matters were supposed to be the sum and substance of Christianity—when theologians, in investigating and

analyzing the Divine nature, and the relations of the persons of the Trinity, were perplexed by shadows and suggestions of thought which it is hard even now to define to ourselves—when Arius, admitting, with Athanasius, the ante-mundane Being of the Son and the Holy Spirit, was denounced as the greatest of heretics, because he conceived that there must have been a time, perhaps before the commencement of the ages, when the Parent Deity dwelt alone in undeveloped, undivided unity, when it was held to be the worst of heresies to say that the Son of God had a beginning while the Father had none; and when popes and kings leagued themselves together to extinguish with fire and sword those who, admitting the Son to be the Word, could not bring themselves to believe that the Word was eternal. But the fact that this Creed is full of subtleties, that it pronounces paradoxically upon the profoundest of all mysteries, that every proposition it contains sums up a generation of controversy, and that these propositions are generally put in words which can only be understood in their true sense by learned men conversant with the terms of scholastic divinity in the Greek and Latin languages, is in itself, I think, enough to condemn the Rubric which prescribes its use in public worship. Take the word "Person," for instance. It is one of the characteristic words of the Creed, and unless that word is understood in the sense in which it was understood by the author of the Creed, it is impossible to form a true conception of the proposition in the fifth verse, that there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. Yet in order to understand

the word in the sense in which it is used in this proposition it is necessary, as Dr. Newman points out in his work on the Arians, to reject various popular senses in which "Person" is used. "We sometimes use it for an individual, as contrasted with a class or multitude, as when we speak of having 'personal objections' to another; sometimes for the body in contrast to the soul, as when we speak of 'beauty of person.' We sometimes use it in the abstract, as when we speak of another as 'insignificant in person;' sometimes in the concrete, as when we call him an 'insignificant person.'" Interpret "person" as synonymous with individual, and you are at once in the thick of the mystery of Tritheism. Interpret it in the classical sense of a mask or character, and you are a Unitarian. Or take the word "substance." Everything depends upon the right understanding of that word. Yet is there one person out of ten thousand in the congregations of the Church of England who can define the meaning of that word as it is used in the Athanasian Creed—give the history of the controversy upon it—and say off-hand how it was used by Athanasius or by Arius? Theologians and men of learning shut up in a library with the writings of St. Augustine and the decisions of councils at their elbows, may be able to spell out the true meaning of the Athanasian Creed, and, perhaps, with the aid of a glossary, to convince themselves, by technical arguments, that the Athanasian Creed is a legitimate development of doctrine implicitly contained in Holy Scripture. But the Greek Church, containing men as learned and acute as any in the ranks of our own Church, rejects the doctrine of the Double Procession as it is set forth in this Creed as a direct contradiction of Scripture, and—to make matters

still worse—as a contradiction in itself. "Your doctrine of the Double Procession," said a priest of the Greek Church to the Dean of Westminster, when travelling in the East, "entirely upsets the doctrine of the Trinity," and I presume, from the Dean's silence, that on the spur of the moment, at least, he had no answer to make to the observation. Yet if one doctrine is set forth in the Athanasian Creed with more emphasis than another, it is the doctrine of the Double Procession; and a Creed containing words which even Athanasius hesitated to use is ordered by the Church of England to be said or sung thirteen times a year, without note or comment, by congregations consisting for the most part of farmers, fishermen, and village shopkeepers.

Even if the Athanasian Creed were a perfect expression of the truth—clear, transparent, and above verbal and theological criticism—we might still hesitate, with its damnatory clauses, to put it into the mouths of congregations like these; but the inconsistency is too glaring—too ridiculous—when a Creed, which is full of difficulties even to acute and learned theologians like the Divinity Professors of Oxford, is put into the mouths of those agricultural labourers who, in the opinion of the Legislature, are not yet sufficiently educated to be allowed to walk into a polling booth once in five or six years, and in a quiet corner by themselves tick off with a pencil the names of men who are, in their opinion, fit to sit in the House of Commons! It is time to put an end to this scandal, and those who hold the doctrine of the Athanasian Creed with the greatest discernment and reverence are generally most emphatic in their condemnation of the present use of the Creed. The plain truth is that any

and every attempt to define in human language a divine mystery like that of the Trinity must end in failure. We may "stumble round about a meaning," and put that meaning into words which represent a distinct and consistent conception in our own minds, but to set up these words as a perfect expression of the truth, to say that every opinion which does not harmonize with this standard is error, and error which *ipso facto* consigns those who hold it, ignorantly or wilfully, to perdition, is, as the Bishop of St. David's well said in his memorandum on the report of the Royal Commission, to place the Athanasian Creed on a level with Holy Writ, to create a new offence against the Divine law, and to introduce a new term of salvation on merely human authority. It has been proposed to meet some of these objections by publishing a fresh translation of the Creed; and the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, after collating our version with the Bodleian, the Colbertine, and the Utrecht versions, admits that we have for 300 years at least been consigning to perdition, in good plain Saxon, people who were never intended to be consigned to perdition, and who are not consigned to perdition in the oldest Greek and Latin manuscripts that have yet been found. But the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, in throwing out his proposal, forgets that our English version differs less from the Utrecht version than the Utrecht version in its turn differs from the Colbertine version, or the Colbertine from the Bodleian. Everything suffers by translation, according to the proverb, except a bishop; and a fresh translation of the Athanasian Creed would, I suspect, only tend to strengthen our faith in the old saw. No fresh translation is needed for scholars, and if the Creed after re-translation

is to be used with the present "setting," it would still require a treatise, a glossary, or a note to explain it to those who doubt, with Sir Thomas Browne, whether "particular churches and sects" have any right "to usurp the gates of heaven, and to turn the key against each other."

To ask that question is to answer it; for it is a question that admits of but one answer, the answer of Jeremy Taylor, of Chillingworth, of Richard Baxter, of Burnet, of Tillotson, and of Arnold—namely, that, however firmly we may be persuaded of the truth of these articles ourselves, we have no right to say that those who do not see eye to eye with us are irrevocably damned. The first use the American Church made of its independence was to strike the Athanasian Creed out of the Prayer Book. The first use the Irish Church makes of its independence is to strike the damnatory clauses out of the Creed. If the English Church were placed to-morrow in the position of the Irish or American Church, the Athanasian Creed would be silenced the day after to-morrow in every church where the voice of the laity could make itself heard. The Athanasian Creed holds its place in the services of the English Church only because the laity are powerless to act except through the Legislature, because the Legislature hesitates to act until the clergy have made up their minds, and because the clergy are assumed to be represented by the Houses of Convocation. It is time that the Legislature gave up that transparent fiction, and, interpreting the better mind of the Church, took this question into its own hands. The Houses of Convocation, if left to themselves, never will agree. They may talk about the origin and authorship of the Creed—concoct notes—collate MSS.

—perplex themselves with prepositions—turn incomprehensible into infinite—or when in a particularly genial mood, chat, after luncheon, over a proposal to relegate the Creed to the end of the Prayer Book with the Articles, or to use the Creed as a canticle three times a year, instead of reading it thirteen times. But that is all Convocation is ever likely to do, and if we are to wait till Convocation agrees unanimously to do what the Irish Church has done, what the American Church has done, what the Greek Church has done, what all the Reformed Churches of the continent have done, we shall have to wait till Armageddon. But when a Royal Commission, after gravely considering the Athanasian Creed, and all the proposals in reference to it that have been under discussion for twenty years, presents a report to Her Majesty, recommending a relaxation in the public use of the Creed, in the name of twenty out of seven-and-twenty Commissioners, and when even the seven agree that it is necessary to do something, without being able to agree among themselves as to what that shall be, I do not think any one can suppose that it is possible for the question to remain where it is. The Athanasian Creed is now the only Creed that contains a set of damnatory clauses; and the Church of England is the only Church which recites this Creed in public. Originally, the Nicene Creed had an anathema at its end. But that anathema was cancelled by the Council of Constantinople; and therefore, if we are to be governed in a matter of this kind by the authority of Councils, authority is on the side of charity. If anathemas were permissible at all, there might be some reason for using them in the case of the Nicene Creed, but there is neither rhyme nor reason, after relinquishing their use in the case of the Nicene Creed,

to preserve them in the case of a Creed which was itself placed under anathema by one of those General Councils whose authority the Church of England accepts as next to that of Scripture. We have, as far as we are concerned, no authority for the use of the Athanasian Creed but usage; for it has never been approved or even discussed by a General Council, and in using it at all we are invoking upon our own heads the anathemas which the Council of Ephesus denounced against those who used any other Creed than that of Nicæa. The Council of Constantinople and the Council of Chalcedon expressly forbade "the composing, exhibiting, producing, or teaching" of any other Creed than the Creed settled by the Nicene Fathers, on the ground that the Nicene Creed, as finally settled at Constantinople, "teaches completely the perfect doctrine concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and fully explains the Incarnation of our Lord," and commanded that every bishop and clergyman so offending should be deposed and every layman anathematized. The use of this Creed is, therefore, in itself a violation of strict Church principles. It is a violation still more glaring of those principles of charity which, in the present age, particularly, all Churches profess to act upon. One sentence of the Creed separates us from the Greek Church. Its spirit isolates us from all Churches, except the Church of Rome, and the anathemas which link us to the Church of Rome part us, one and all, from the Irish Church, from the American Church, and from the Reformed Churches of the continent.

It is not, however, in the interest of religious union, or of the Church of England alone, that I propose the abandonment of this Creed. These interests ought, in

themselves and by themselves, to be worth a little consideration. But these interests, after all, are trifles in comparison with the interest of religion, of charity, and of truth. The Athanasian Creed is a satire upon all three; and it is because the Athanasian Creed is felt to be a satire upon truth, charity, and religion, that there is such a general and growing repugnance on the part of congregations to share in its recitation, and on the part of the clergy to ask their congregations to recite it, or even to recite it themselves without reservations, glosses, and explanations, which, if permissible in a case of this kind at all, where casuistry must oppose itself to common sense, can only be used by men who are willing to use explanations that defy all the rules of grammar, contradict the manifest meaning of the Creed, throw a slur upon the sincerity and sanity of its authors, place those who use the Creed in the position of men who, "desiring to be teachers of the law, understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm," and reduce to a mere soulless ceremony—a mere act of religious pantomime—that which was originally intended to be, and is still, even with all our Notes of Explanation, and all our glosses, an express and formal repudiation by the Church of that cardinal virtue of all religion, of Christianity above every other religion, which, rejoicing in the truth, and vaunting not itself, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things. The Athanasian Creed is now the greatest blemish left in the services of the English Church. It is, I believe, a danger as well as a blemish; and if Convocation persists, as it has persisted till now, in maintaining this all but intolerable burden upon the consciences of the

laity, it must not be surprised if one of these days it finds itself called upon to choose between the Athanasian Creed without a State Church, and a State Church without the Athanasian Creed. The Church must either abolish the use of the Athanasian Creed, or the Athanasian Creed will abolish the Church. That is the issue to which the discussion has now been brought, and upon an issue like that there is and can be but one answer, from those who wish well to the Church. The Athanasian Creed must go, and the sooner it goes the better, for whatever we may think of its doctrines, the low and undignified deceptions by which we have contrived till now to palliate its use are consistent neither with Christianity, candour, nor common sense.

THE DISUSE

OF THE

ATHANASIAN CREED.

BY

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"The strength of the Church of England lies in its ability to adapt itself to the wants of the age in which we live."

BISHOP OF LONDON. 1858.

"Nihil est tam voluntarium quam Religio. In quâ si animus sacrificantis absit, jam sublata, jam nulla est."

LACTANTIUS.

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THE DISUSE OF THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

Our late old Vicar, a kind man,
Once, sir, he said to me,
He wished that service was clean out
Of our good Liturgy.

COLERIDGE, *Three Graves.*

How should men speak to their Maker when they assemble in His house?

"They addressed a Being whom they loved, and they spoke of those whom they loved," was Mackenzie's famous description of Christian worship. "The words were mostly taken from Holy Writ; they spoke the praises of God and His care of good men."

For a century past the students of English literature have dwelt on this as an ideal description of public devotion; and the Church of England may fairly claim that the daily services of her sweet and majestic Liturgy are the nearest approach to that ideal that any national church has yet made. For what is the essence of public devotion? Surely *communion* and *sympathy*—the union of all the worshippers with each other in common emotions, and these emotions such as create benevolence towards all else that lives.

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

Yet it is not possible for a human composition to be free from human infirmity and human passions; and these have from time to time left, even on the Anglican Liturgy, traces which its best friends have most grieved to see.

Pious care, however, has been sedulous to remove them as lapse of time allowed; and the Litany no longer prays for deliverance from "the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome, and from all his detestable enormities." On the Fifth of November we no longer denounce "Popish treachery and tyranny;" nor on the Thirtieth of January do we arraign the Commonwealth's men as "cruel and bloody; murderers; violent and bloodthirsty; sons of Belial;" or pledge ourselves to the belief that Charles the First was "a martyr," "the greatest of kings and best of men:" or gravely allege that Charles the Second was "miraculously preserved," and "by a wonderful providence."

These changes were opposed in their time. The abrogation of the three Political Services called forth "the deep regret" of the Bishop of Chichester; and the Bishop of Bangor pronounced it to be (Hansard, iii. 151, 495) a disclaimer of the providence of God and of our gratitude towards Him. But probably there is not a single layman, priest, or bishop in England to-day who regrets the abandonment of these ancient prayers, or would consent to their restoration.

Now there still remains within the covers of our prayer-books a form of words which seems open to yet graver objections than were raised against any of the services

that the amending hand has thus withdrawn. Like them, it has long ceased to express the feelings of the most upright and intelligent of our clergy or laity. Like them, it speaks of the followers of other faiths in language that tends not merely to promote controversy but to encourage rancour. Like them, it partakes of the vehement feelings of contemporary partisans—feelings which the lapse of centuries has rendered utterly repugnant to the calmer thought of the present day. Like them, it calls forth in turn feelings of indignation in those against whom its maledictions are directed. Like them, by exaggerated language, it drives its opponents into exaggerations of their opposing error. Like them, it invites the worshippers of God to address Him with language in which their hearts take no concern.*

Yet all this is but the least part of the evils of the Athanasian Creed.

The political maledictions that occasionally stained the loftiness of Anglican devotion had at least a limited range and an intelligible foundation. The conduct of the Pope, of Guido Faux, and of the Regicides, was matter of common notoriety; and the issues between them and their opponents were level to the capacity of all men. Every man who repeated the Liturgical words knew what he meant, and why he meant it. And the utmost that he

* To it as to them we may apply the wise words of the Bishop of London (Hansard, June 28, 1858):—"It is not desirable that, when we approach God in prayer, one word should drop from our lips likely to call up feelings of indignation in the breasts of our fellow-countrymen. . . . . It is not desirable that the Church of England should exhibit even the appearance of retaining empty forms. It is desirable that the forms of devotion should express our heartfelt feelings."

invoked on his opponents was "scattering," "cutting off," and "clothing with shame and confusion." He ventured not to follow them beyond the grave, or to predict the judgment of Him to Whom vengeance belongs.

But the Athanasian Creed does not stop where common knowledge and common thought must stop. Alike in its subject-matter and in its denunciations, it transgresses the limits set to the mind of man. It deals with the most abstruse matters that can occupy the thoughts of men or angels; it lays down startling propositions in studiedly paradoxical form; it discusses the most recondite mysteries of the Divine nature in theological language of the highest technicality;—and then requires a belief in these astounding mysteries as the first requisite to a happy immortality! Can we wonder that congregations should shrink from solemnly pretending to the Searcher of Hearts that they believe propositions which not one man in ten thousand of them has learning enough even to understand; and which not one man in a hundred thousand has leisure to verify?

Can we wonder that there are "throughout the country thousands on thousands of zealous and enthusiastic members of the Church of England who would sooner cut off their right hand than say they agreed with all the expressions of the Athanasian Creed?"*

Can we wonder that seven thousand laymen, headed by Lord Shaftesbury himself, have petitioned the Archbishops for the disuse of the Creed?†

* Duke of Marlborough, in House of Lords, 28th June, 1858.

† Canon Gregory alleged in Convocation that the Athanasian Creed was "*the one comfort in life* of the poor communicants of

Can we wonder that nearly three thousand of the clergy themselves, despite all the prepossessions of caste and usage, have joined in the prayer of their flocks, or that bishops and archbishops sympathize in it?*

Dean Stanley has collected a *catena* of deceased divines, from Chillingworth to Bishop Lonsdale, who have objected to the damnatory clauses of the Creed, including also Archbishops Tillotson and Secker, Bishop Marsh, Jeremy Taylor, Baxter, Professor Burton, and Dr. Arnold.

He might have added Bishop Sherlock;† Bishop Smalridge;‡ Bishop Tomline; Bishop Wilcox, of Rochester; Archbishop Whately, who used to boast that he had never publicly read the Creed; Bishop Clayton,§ who declared in the Irish House of Lords, in an elaborate speech, that he was "solicitous for the removal of it from the Liturgy;" and Archbishop Sharp, who, on hearing a clergyman say, "I nearly forgot to use the Athanasian Creed to-day," answered piteously, "And why *didn't* you forget it?" ‖ or Bishop Willis,¶ who reiterated Tillotson's

the Church of England." But the Vicar of Beaminster confesses (*Guardian*, April, 1872), that when he tried to get the more intelligent of his own communicants to petition in favour of its retention, the result was "most humiliating and most disheartening."

* Even Bishop Moberley desires to "omit the damnatory clauses altogether. If they are to be understood in, what many people regard as, their undoubted grammatical and literal sense. . . . *I for one do not believe them.*" (Sermon of July 21st, 1872.) So, too, even Bishop Wordsworth, who says,—"There is a want of reserve, amounting almost to profaneness, in calling upon a mixed congregation to pronounce so particularly upon the terms without which salvation is not to be obtained." (*Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. x.)

† *Gentleman's Magazine*, Aug. 1773.

‡ Whiston's "Life of Clarke," p. 177.

§ Feb. 2, 1756. The speech was published in a pamphlet form

‖ "Life of Emlyn," p. 58.

¶ *Monthly Repository*, xx. 290.

wish that the Church "were well rid of it," and said, "It would be much better for this Church and nation if we had no such Creed, or if the reading of it in congregations were not enjoined by law."

For two centuries has this Creed been fruitful in evils to the English Church, affording matter of mockery to her enemies, embarrassing the devotions of her most attached children, and preventing the allegiance of many who otherwise would gladly have worshipped before her altars, or even ministered there. Ever and anon the Creed has fallen into disuse before the public sense of these evils, and then been recalled in some season of controversy.

In the reigns of the early Stuarts it seems to have been seldom recited; but it was afterwards electrified into life in the storms of the Revolution. The growth of Latitudinarianism dismissed it again from the churches of those who, like their great leader, Archbishop Tillotson, "wished we were well rid of it." And if some troublesome attendant insisted on its recitation, Dr. Parr * might freely preface it with words of disapprobation—a preface which tradition preserves in the form, "This, my brethren, is said to have been the Creed of St. Athanasius. It is not my creed; and I sincerely hope that it is not yours!" When Porteus was Bishop of London, he received a petition from 200 clergymen, praying to be relieved from using the *Quicunque*. The High-Church revival of this century has made the use of the Creed general once more, though there are still churches, and, indeed, whole districts (especially, it is said, in Lincolnshire and Shropshire), where the Creed has not been recited within living

* Field's "Life of Parr," ii. 326.

memory. Indeed, the uncompromising demand for retaining its use is now limited to High Churchmen, and has sunk into a party badge. The Ritual Commissioners, who reported in 1870, were nearly unanimous in desiring a change; seven desiring an explanatory rubric to nullify the damnatory clauses by a humane interpretation, and nineteen (out of the remaining twenty who signed the report) desiring the entire withdrawal of the creed from public use.*

The unanimity of so many men eminent for abilities and for piety, and drawn from all parties in the Church, was a fact too striking to pass in silence. Accordingly the years 1870–73 witnessed an active controversy in the newspaper press and on the platform, and produced in addition an entire controversial literature, amounting to some scores of publications in a more permanent form, on the subject. Then, in the discussions on the "Public Worship Bill" of 1874, it was made amply clear that if there were any "neutralization" of portions of the Service from the battle-field of legal compulsion, this Creed must certainly find a place among them.

To one who considers the Athanasian Creed in the light of this recent controversy, it seems hard to decide whether the writings of its friends or its foes afford the stronger arguments against it. But as the burden of proof necessarily lies on those who advocate a change, let us see what case can be alleged for its disuse.

At present the clergy are required, by Article VIII., to

* Among the nineteen we find Archbishop Tait, Bishop Thirlwall, the Bishops of Winchester and Carlisle, Dean Stanley, and two Regius Professors of Divinity. Bishop Temple (*Charge* of 1872) also desires this withdrawal.

declare that they "thoroughly receive and believe" it; and with this we are not now concerned. But, by the Act of Uniformity, its public recitation, in lieu of the Apostles' Creed, is required at the Morning Service on *thirteen* feast-days in each year (a proverbially unlucky number). Of these, Black Bartholomew's Day is fitly made one. This rubric imposes its use, not merely on professed theologians, but on the laity. Hence every layman is concerned in considering its contents, and in determining whether he will consent to be compelled to use it. Never yet did we meet a layman who approved of the public use of the damnatory clauses; and probably few who really weigh the matter would approve of the public use of the rest of the Creed.

Better were it, on these thirteen days, instead of cursing heretics, to curse—or, better still, to pray for deliverance from—that sin of uncharitableness which doth so easily beset all churches!

II.

(*a.*) ITS SPIRIT UNCHRISTIAN.

Charity is the essence of Christianity. By no mark does a man, an age, a church, a creed, more conclusively confess an unchristian character than by manifesting a want of charity.

Now the Athanasian Creed is the great parent of what religious bigotry still lingers among us. Thrice in the Creed is the damnation foretold of all who disbelieve any portion of its contents. Why did the author insert this? To raise a feeling of the hatefulness of that disbelief. He knew that men cannot hear, day after day, that

a particular sin—especially if it be one to which they feel no inclination themselves—is hateful to God and will incur eternal fire, without hating the sin, and by a natural association looking at least askance at the sinner. Good and kindly and pious as your friend the heretic may be, it is impossible to feel ease or pleasure or satisfaction in the presence of one who you know will without doubt perish everlastingly. (How often have we heard it said, in honest regret, "What a good man Mr. So-and-so is! What a pity that he can't be saved!") We waive the conclusive proofs that savage ages or uneducated mobs might furnish of this. Let any middle-class Unitarian of the present day, however pure his life, however earnest his piety, detail the coldness or the insults that he has met with in the course of his life. Let any middle-class Trinitarian who knows and loves Unitarian friends, recall the words and tones in which he hears them spoken of—nay, in which consistent Churchmanship, till restrained by strong affection, prompts him despite himself to speak of them. And if the Unitarian pass to a less educated class of society, or a more provincial neighbourhood, what an outcast he becomes! His employer dismisses him, his acquaintances will not invite him, there are no Trinitarians too low to despise him. From public or charitable work he is excluded; or he may do the work, but must have no part in the credit. In his youth he is struck back into obscurity; and it is only by the stern independence that a lonely faith so often inspires, if in his old age he has ceased to be unknown. Athanasianism not intolerant! Alas! they jest at scars who never felt the wound.

That these threats of damnation, so sweeping, so un-

founded, so unscriptural,* so intolerant, can no longer find a place in our belief, is now admitted by all cultivated Trinitarians, even by those who still seek to retain them on our lips. A man shrinks from dooming Newton, Locke, Milton, Chillingworth, Sir Matthew Hale, Lord Falkland, Channing, Mrs. Somerville, and Florence Nightingale, to everlasting tortures, simply for having made a mistake in working out a metaphysical problem of unusual difficulty. With Pope, he refuses to

> With feeble hand,
> Presume Thy bolts to throw,
> Or deal damnation round the land
> On each I judge Thy foe.

Like Byron, he asks,—

> Shall man attempt to reach the skies,
> Yet doom his brother to expire,
> Whose soul a different hope supplies,
> Or doctrines less obscure inspire?

Or, with a less grave poet, he reflects,—

> Faith, after all, is matter of opinion,
> What's one man's poison is another's meat;
> We must not think a man the devil's minion
> Because no creed he happens to repeat;
> Nor doom to fires eternal the Socinian
> Because to him one God is all-complete.

Hence we have no surprise in finding that, when the American Church got free from State fetters, she used her

* A despairing attempt has been made to extort from Scripture one solitary warrant for these curses, by citing the words attributed to Christ in Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Unhappily this attempt is open to three objections, each of which is of itself fatal:—

1. The verse is not part of Holy Writ, but an interpolation—"and so," admits the best known of Ritualist divines (Mr. Littledale),

freedom to lay aside the Athanasian Creed. Or, that as soon as the Irish Church emerged into like liberty, she struck out the damnatory clauses, and declared that they "occasioned great pain and scandal to tender consciences."* It is inevitable that the mother Church will soon follow the example of her daughters.

Surely that Christian's faith is sufficient who believes every doctrine that God has indisputably set forth in Holy Writ; and surely the best proof that a doctrine is not indisputably set forth there is, that great and good men have earnestly disputed whether it was or not. Divines as learned as Clarke, Chillingworth, Lardner; bishops as eminent as Law, and Watson, and Clayton, and Sherlock, and Rundle; philosophers as profound as Locke and Newton; poets as skilled in language as Milton and Longfellow; historians as great as Prescott and Wheaton; jurists as acute as Kingsdown and Story; linguists like Sir William Jones and Sir John Bowring; have searched the Scriptures with prayer and pains whether these things were so, and have risen convinced that they were *not*. If no doctrine is to be imposed on us of necessity which is not *clearly* to be found in

"will everybody say who is familiar with one of the most rudimentary facts in New-Testament criticism."

II. The "belief" mentioned in it has nothing to do with the contents of the Athanasian Creed, as a glance at either the preceding or the following verse would show.

III. The word "damned" is a mistranslation (or rather an archaism), for "judged," or—as the Douay version has it—"condemned;" and has no necessary concern with the *future* life.

* This important change was carried by eight Bishops against three; by eighty-eight clergy against forty-four; by one hundred and thirty-four laity against fourteen. What a state of feeling do such majorities reveal! The division on the *third* reading was 125 to 61; and 196 laymen to 25.

Scripture, can commonplace men feel any conviction of the *clearness* of doctrines for which men such as these have sought, and sought in vain? Bishop Horsley, the most famed of modern orthodox writers on this controversy, a man not prone to hesitancy or suspense, wrote at last to his antagonist Priestley, "I believe that few have thought so much upon these subjects as you and I have done, who have not at first wavered." (Letter XVII.) If there be matter in the controversy to lead even to a temporary wavering, with what face can we repeat this Creed? Shall we tell God that our neighbours are doomed to certain damnation, when our study of God's book may leave at least a wavering as to whether they will be damned or not?*

Hence we need not wonder that no educated theologian really believes these clauses—not even the writers who are most earnest for their retention. But uneducated hearers do believe them; and, of course, the important question is, What meaning do these solemn declarations of damnation convey to those into whose mouths we put them? What is the uneducated man thus led to think of his Unitarian neighbours, and of the way in which he ought to treat them? A few days' residence in Ireland may suffice to teach any one how little whole years of intercourse, and whole lives of charity, can do to foster kindness of feeling, or even to awaken gratitude, where the neighbour or the patron belongs to a class that is to

* The spirit of judging and damning which these anathemas inspire, provoked from Professor de Morgan a retort in their own fashion:—"Whosoever would serve God, before all things it is necessary that he pronounce not God's judgment upon his neighbours. Which judgment, except every one do leave to God Himself, without doubt he is a bigoted noodle."

"perish everlastingly." In vain do the clergy contend, "The Creed cannot cause bigotry, for it damns only groups, and not individuals;" as if the whole might be lost, and yet its parts be saved! The *Quicunque* is, indeed, in a bad way, if its doctrinal clauses contradict arithmetic, and its damnatory ones contravene the *Dictum de omni et nullo!*

The Roman Church has an elaborate scheme of distinctions for evading her anathemas against heretics, whenever it is convenient to evade them. She says, "There is salvation only for those who are in the Church;" then adds, if pressed, "but many are in the soul of the Church who are not in its body." And yet all these refinements have had no effect in mitigating the feelings with which the average sincere Catholic regards his Protestant neighbours. How, then can we expect that anathemas will be any less productive of bigotry when the Church that uses them has authorized no such mitigations of their sweep?*

In vain, too, do the clergy tell us that they possess explanatory glosses for the Creed; those glosses are kept for the study, and forgotten in the pulpit. "The damnatory clauses are only a part of our doctrine on this matter." True, but they are the only part you bring forward in your teaching, and you leave the humaner part to chance. No doubt, in his study, the trained

* The spirit which these anathemas inspire may be judged of by the fact that a prominent clerical defender of the Creed, writing of those of his clerical brethren who (whilst heartily accepting the Creed itself) desire to release the laity from its compulsory recital, considers them as deserving of *death!* and speaks of Dean Stanley's "*profligacy*" in joining them. (See the passages quoted in Savile's "Athanasian Creed," p. 23.)

theologian will admit that, practically, though he accepts the damnatory *words*, yet he has utterly given up their meaning. In most cases he accepts them, as Dr. Arnold did, in a sense that "substitutes for them propositions of an entirely different character."

As the present Archbishop of Canterbury said, unchallenged, in Convocation, "All persons understand the damnatory clauses with a certain"—or rather uncertain "mental reservation." An *un*certain one, for the numerous catalogue of the glosses is a strange chapter in the history of misplaced ingenuity. By them, as the Provost of Oriel admits, "what will always seem to the general reader to be the literal and obvious meaning of the words, appears to be explained away." The English nation, trained to straightforwardness in business, and to verbal accuracy in law and in science, will hardly relish this evasiveness.

The very title of the clauses must be changed. They are no longer to be "damnatory," but "monitory," "precautionary," "commendatory," "warning," or even "the *Salvation* clauses"! (Damnatory of one thing at least they are—of the spirit and feelings of their framer.)

But when we get to their *meaning*, the glossators differ strangely. That the Creed does not mean what it says, they all agree; but no two agree as to what it does mean. The Province of Canterbury devised its own gloss, or "Synodical Declaration;"* but the Province of York changed and altered it. The Revision Commissioners of

* Which Synodical Declaration, says the Provost of Oriel, "affords the clearest proof that the Creed is not now accepted by the Church according to the plain literal obvious meaning of several of its subordinate clauses."—*Considerations on Athanasian Creed.*

1689 said a third thing; the Bishops, on the Ritual Commission of 1870, a fourth (after making and repudiating a fifth and sixth); the Oxford Professors devised a seventh; and, in the womb of time, probably more are yet concealed.

Perhaps it would be better if they had all admitted with Bishop Moberley (*Sermon* of July 21st, 1872), "I freely acknowledge I accept these verses with a gloss. But when I attempt to put my gloss into words, I find myself wholly at a loss to do so. The attempt breaks down under me. I cannot word my own gloss without practically annihilating, or taking well-nigh the entire force and power from, the words of the Creed."

Some writers say, like the well-known Wheatley, that the damnatory clauses do not extend to the whole of the Creed;* others say that they extend to all the Creed, but do not extend to all misbelievers. And this latter school of expositors are further divided into those who define the class of misbelievers to whom the clauses *do* apply, and those who prefer the easier task of defining to whom they do *not* apply. Some startle us by their theology, like Dr. Pusey, when he says,† "Hereditary misbelief mitigates the responsibility of individuals. Heresy loses some of its virus by transmission." Others embarrass us by their psychology, which treats of "wilful" belief, and "invincible" belief, and "voluntary" belief, and "delibe-

* "We are not required by the words of the Creed to believe *the whole* upon pain of damnation."—Wheatley *on the Prayer-book*, p. 146. Whilst, on the other hand, the Dean of Ripon (*Times*, Feb. 5, 1873):—"According to the simplest and most obvious rules of construction, all the definitions and defences and illustrations which have gone before the clause, 'He that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity,' *are* involved in the word 'thus.'"

† "Responsibility of Intellect," p. 42.

rate" belief, and "obstinate" belief; and at last convinces us that explanations are the most puzzling things in the world. The general result however is, in plain words, this: that (according to the non-Wheatley school) the only men who will be damned for not being Trinitarians are those who have investigated the question fully, and have made up their minds after mature reflection. It seems, indeed, a strange reward for their pains; but we are not concerned with the justice of the matter. It is pleasant, however, to reflect how small a portion of the seven hundred million non-Trinitarians in the world will fall under this description. If this is all the Creed means, what a pity that it is not all that it says!

Considering that the damnatory clauses will thus operate on only about one misbeliever in a million, it seems as if the logical proportion between the Rule and the Exception would be better preserved—if theologians are bent on sticking to general propositions alone—by saying that it is *not* before all things necessary to hold the Catholic Faith; that non-holders will *not* without doubt perish everlastingly; and that it is *not* necessary to everlasting salvation to believe rightly the Incarnation.

All educated Athanasian theologians, nay, *all* Athanasians who write in defence of the *Quicunque*, assume the truth of one or other of these various glosses. Nay, the 1,200 clergy and laity who signed the Memorial in defence of the Creed, go so far as to allege that "*every well-instructed Christian* must" assume one of them. It is a pity that the original compiler of the Creed did not insert some clause that at least hinted at the possibility of one or other or more of the comfortable and incompatible salvos for tender consciences that are thus devised in

such bewildering fertility. But such salvos were little in harmony with the spirit of the controversialists of his time!

Under the humane ingenuity of Dr. Pusey,* the damnatory clauses disappear into the doctrine that "Out of every religion or irreligion, out of every clime, in whatever ignorance steeped, in whatever hatred, or contempt, or blasphemy of Christ nurtured, God has His own elect who ignorantly worship; and whose ignorant fear or longing He who inspires it will accept." And yet we thirteen times a year solemnly tell Him that "it is necessary to everlasting salvation to believe rightly the Incarnation." How long are we to go on meaning one thing and saying another? It is our duty to speak plainly and truthfully, *even* when we speak to our Father.

The simple statement of the "glosses" seems enough to condemn them. Read this elaborate one, solemnly put forth by Archbishop Synge, and say if it does not seem a satire!—

"'Which faith, except every one'—*to whom it is sufficiently proposed and preached*—'do'—*according to his capacity*—'keep whole and undefiled'—*without knowingly or carelessly* giving way to doctrines contrary to it. . . . 'He, therefore, that will'—do all that is *ordinarily* necessary to—'be saved must thus think of the Trinity. Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation'—in that *ordinary* method". . . . &c., &c.

But even if we could reconcile our own consciences to using these mental glosses, even if we were content to come before God's presence with an unreality on our lips, the main difficulty would still remain. The mass of

* "Responsibility of Intellect," p. 42.

churchgoers, probably the mass of clergy, realize nothing of them. "Every well-instructed Christian" may, as the 1,200 allege, accept them; but the Church makes no effort to render Christians well instructed concerning them. I have heard many a Trinity-Sunday sermon, and many a denunciation of never-ending suffering against heathens and against Unitarians, but never a hint from the pulpit about these glosses. The clergyman who should mention them to any ordinary congregation would be regarded as a heretic himself. They are unknown to the laity, and, unfortunately, it is by the laity alone that (on the common antiphonal system) the three damnatory verses are recited. Nay, I have heard an eloquent and influential Dean denounce this belief in the salvability of Pagans as "an infidel doctrine—amiable, indeed, if infidelity ever could be amiable—but infidelity none the less."

Whether or not, then, we retain the *Quicunque* in our Services, we cannot retain these clauses. Many say they are no part of the Creed. If so, it is only one reason the more for omitting them. Many say that they have "glosses" that explain them. That is but an additional reason; *qui s'excuse s'accuse*. They who worship in spirit and truth will not consent to recite to Almighty God words which they disbelieve except by a "gloss."

Will the English nation longer consent that its national Church, already tottering to her fall from the narrowness of her base, shall resist every effort to widen her? That she shall repel worshippers, by imposing on them intolerant forms that revolt their hearts? That she shall keep in common remembrance forebodings and curses that sever sympathies and embitter domestic intercourse? That she shall set the son at variance with the father, and

the mother with the daughter, and cause the wife to shed bitter tears as she mourns at the eternal peril of the loved one who sleeps within her arms? Is not the Head of our Church the Empress of India? Does she not rule a hundred and forty millions who utterly deny the Athanasian doctrines, and but forty millions who, even nominally, believe them? Do not those hundred and forty millions, men of every English realm, include some of her noblest subjects, of the most devout worshippers, the most wise philosophers, the most practised statesmen of her empire and of her kingdom;—in a word, some of the best children of this queenly commonwealth of England? *Are* we without doubt that these men will perish everlastingly? If we are not, ought we to go on telling God that we are?

"Woe unto them that put bitter for sweet."

(β.) Its Origin Apocryphal.

Probably one of the strongest reasons by which the mass of the laity are induced to stifle their repugnance to the *Quicunque* is their reverence for the saint whose name it bears. However slight their knowledge of ecclesiastical history, they have yet a regard for one who loved truth so dearly that he was content to stand for it "alone against the world," and whose stern saintship extorted respect even from Gibbon. Hence, whatever came from his pen seems sacred in their eyes.*

* Yet Athanasius, in his own lifetime, was condemned by six Councils; one consisting of 300 bishops, and another of 550 bishops —the largest Council ever held.

But this reverence is wholly misdirected here. As one of the recent defenders of the Creed* readily admits, "Nobody in the world thinks that it was written by St. Athanasius himself." Its history, indeed, as has been forcibly said, is "gangrened with imposture." Not a single clause of the *Quicunque* can be found in any of the writings of Athanasius; and it seems likely that whilst this Creed was originally written in Latin, to him Latin was a language entirely unknown. Nay, more than all this, Athanasius would have repudiated the doctrines of this Creed, and is one of the very persons who, according to it, will perish everlastingly.† Well may Dean Stanley then call it the *anti-Athanasian* Creed, and say, "It is now known with absolute certainty that Athanasius not only never did write it, but never could have written it."

Unanimously as it had been attributed to Athanasius in the dark ages, Vossius, in 1642, overthrew that theory; and, consequently, the English rubric of 1662 substituted, "*commonly called* the Creed of St. Athanasius," for the positive "Athanasius' Creed," which still stands in Article VIII. But this negative result is all that criticism has attained; the authorship and date of the Creed are still unsettled—nay, in the judgment of the writer who has done most to settle them, they form

* Canon Ridley: "The Athanasian Creed," p. 4.

† "It is certain that neither Athanasius, nor any other Greek Father, ever admitted the doctrine of the 'Double Procession' of the Holy Ghost as it reads in this Creed. And, in opposition to the assertion of this Creed respecting the Son being begotten, Athanasius himself expressly declared (in his defence of the Nicene Creed) that the Son is *not* begotten."—Rev. B. W. Savile's *The Athanasian Creed*, p. 11 (read at the Plymouth Conference of Clergy and Laity).

"one of the most intricate of literary questions."* The *Quicunque* is an utterly "unfathered" Creed.

To have proved that Athanasius was not the writer is perhaps of no great moment. His name would have won no authority for it with the learned, however different may be the case with the laity. For "the Church of England has on no occasion identified herself with the teaching of Athanasius, which, according to all accounts, was very imperfect.†"

But the *date* of the Creed is a matter of far greater import, and yet is equally unsettled. The earliest date claimed for it is as late as the end of the fourth century, and even this rests on no emphatic evidence; later, and later, and later dates are assigned by other critics; and the recent writers who have elaborately investigated the point—Messrs. Ffoulkes, Lumby, and Swainson, all three eminent clergymen of the English Church—are agreed in bringing it down to the *ninth* century.‡

We need not recall the dark picture of the Church of

* Professor Swainson's elaborate treatise "On the Creeds" (1875), p. 195.

† Swainson, p. 206. On p. 76, he reckons *five* doctrinal heresies in Athanasius's teachings. Professor Hey, in his defence of the Creed, says (p. 35), "The confessions of faith that are undoubtedly Athanasius's never arrived at the same degree of celebrity with this one."

‡ "Somewhere between 813–850 it was brought nearly into the form in which we now use it: and before the earlier of these dates it was not known. . . . In Gaul, it gained general acceptance soon after the middle of the ninth century, and the strong expressions of its warning clauses are to be traced to the fierce contests which at that period agitated the whole ecclesiastical world."—Lumby's *History of the Creeds*, 1873, p. 255. "That the Athanasian Creed was not known in its present form before the latter years of the eighth century, I conceive to be capable of *proof*."—Swainson *on the Creeds*, p. 195.

that dark age, with all its backslidings from primitive truth and Scriptural purity. Will English Churchmen of the nineteenth century long submit to the imposition of a form which offends both rational piety and Christian charity, when they find it can claim no higher source than an anonymous compiler of the middle ages?*

"The Athanasian Creed was at once the expression of Latin dogmatism and the lever of Latin despotism—a symbol of the impending subjugation to Rome. Every time we recite the Athanasian Creed, *it is reason not Scripture that speaks, Charlemagne not Athanasius that expounds, a faith deliberately set up in opposition to the faith of Nicæa and Constantinople that is professed.*"†

Generation after generation of saints and martyrs passed to their rest without having heard or thought of the details of the mode in which the Paraclete proceeded, or the Logos became flesh. Can it be contended that the Dying Thief "thus thought of the Trinity"? Or those early disciples who "had not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost"?

(γ.) Its Use not Catholic.

Our last remarks might suffice to establish this. A

* "If I were to express my opinion of the Athanasian Creed merely from my experience of the motives and actions of mankind I should say that it was written by a clever but most unscrupulous person, who did not believe one syllable of the doctrine; that he purposely asserted and reiterated propositions which contradict each other in terms, in order that in after and more enlightened times he should not be supposed to have believed in the religion which he had from worldly motives adopted."—Babbage's *Passages in the Life of a Philosopher*, p. 403.

† "The Athanasian Creed." By Rev. E. S. Ffoulkes, B.D., late Fellow and Tutor of Jesus College, Oxford, p. 277.

Creed of so late origin cannot have been employed *semper ubique, et ab omnibus.* If we lay it aside, we do not sever our Liturgy from those of the Early Church, but, instead, remove a glaring difference between them; we do not mutilate primitive perfection, but we return to primitive simplicity.

Many persons deprecate the removal of the Creed from public use, under the impression that it is and has ever been so universally used in public Christian worship, that its removal would sever the unity of the Anglican Church with her sisters. The very reverse is the fact—we should be restoring her to an unity of practice which she alone violates.

What are the facts;—no church but the English uses the Creed in congregational worship. Notoriously, the non-episcopal churches of England and America never so employ it. The Protestant churches of the Continent never so employ it (and when some of the Revision Commissioners of 1689 proposed to allow its disuse, the French, German, Dutch, and Swiss Churches approved of the proposal).* The Greek Church does not so employ it; and, indeed, repudiates it wholly—as might be expected in the case of a Creed that dooms all her disciples to perish everlastingly. (High-Church writers have made much of its appearing in a Greek manual of devotion, the *Horologium;* overlooking the fact that it appeared there (*a*) only in a mutilated form, (*b*) only in the *un*authorized editions of the manual, (*c*) and in them only since 1787. It is wholly omitted in the single authorized edition, that of 1869.) Even the Church of Rome has never given her formal

* Bishop Kennet: "Complete History," iii. 588. (*See* also Archbishop of Canterbury at Sacheverell's trial.)

sanction to the Creed; and the only Roman service in which it is used is Prime, a service intended for the clergy alone. In other words, she never calls upon the laity to hear its public repetition.

How stood the matter in the mediæval church? The *Quicunque* was not originally intended for use as a creed, but as a psalm or rhythmic treatise. It has not even the form of a creed; and for centuries it was reserved for the use of the monks or clergy alone.* A recent strenuous defender of it† admits that for "long after Charlemagne" it "was enjoined upon the priesthood and the monks only, the laity being instructed exclusively in the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments;" and only claims that "about the ninth or tenth centuries it *began* to form part of the devotions at Prime in various *monastic houses*." And Mr. Lumby confesses (p. 267), "There is not a particle of authority in the early times of the *Quicunque* for the congregational use to which it was ultimately put in the Church of England." Even the English Church has never dreamed of imposing it at baptism, or on catechumens, or at confirmation. She invites laymen to membership upon no other test than the Apostles' Creed.

* It should be with High Churchmen a conclusive argument against the use of the Creed, that the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon (the universally accepted Third and Fourth General Councils) forbade by their decrees the composition or teaching of any confession of faith in addition to the Nicene. (*See* Baronius, viii. 100.) The Rev. B. W. Savile, in the work I have already quoted, justly says that the laborious attempts to argue "that the compulsory recital of the Athanasian Creed does not contravene this, are a melancholy proof of the incapability of the clerical mind, when warped by party spirit, to descend to the region of plain common sense" (p. 52).

† Professor Brewer: "Athanasian Creed Vindicated," p. 11.

What they may think thirteen times a year, as to her keeping faith with them, is another matter!

(δ.) Its Text Unsettled.

Reading the emphatic language in which a certain section of the clergy demand our assent to the Athanasian Creed, we naturally ask the question, "To *which* Athanasian Creed?" Is it to one of the Latin MSS.? or to one of the Greek MSS.? If so, to which one, and why to it? Is it only to what all the Latin, or all the Greek MSS. agree in? If so, are you not relaxing the stringency of the original author's requirements? But, doubtless, the real answer would be, "You must believe the version given in the English Prayer-book—the only version sanctioned by the English Church." Unfortunately this version, says the most illustrious defender of the Creed (Dean Goulburn, Speech of 1873, p. 33), "is defective in several points, and gives wrong impressions of the meaning of the original."

So true is this that the Six Bishops who were appointed by the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury as a Committee on the matter, desire no less than *forty-six* changes to be made in our version, *thirteen* of which they admit will give you a meaning new to the ordinary reader, and that, too, in points of importance. Indeed there is also a fourteenth, or forty-seventh, passage where "change is desirable; but [the meaning] cannot be brought out into a literal translation" in English. (Let us hope that until an adequate English paraphrase of the word can be devised, no Christian who is unskilled in the classical

languages will "perish everlastingly" for not having his faith on this particular "whole and undefiled"!) Moreover, the good bishops' corrections are not limited to changes of translation. They deny the purity of the very source from which the translation is made, rejecting verse forty-two as spurious, and not being altogether confident about verses one, two, and thirty-seven.

Whence, it may be asked, came this English version of ours? It is a translation of a translation of a translation. It was turned into English from the version made by Bryling (a printer at Bâle) from the Greek version.

Moreover, the Six Bishops plead for a suspense of judgment. At present, they say, "the existing knowledge of the MSS. of this Creed is very limited. Few have been accurately collated, and fewer still critically examined with reference to the questions that have been recently raised. It seems also reasonable to believe that even moderate research may elicit documents of considerable value and antiquity that may contribute much, directly and indirectly, to our critical knowledge of the Creed. Till we have before us the results of this research, *no judgment* nor recommendation can *fairly* be considered final."

And, meanwhile, amid the chaos of conflicting manuscripts, and conflicting translations, can the millions of churchgoing Englishmen "fairly" be asked to pronounce, in the house of God, a "judgment" which "can fairly be considered final," about the inevitable damnation of all the good and pious men who feel scruples in accepting all the contents of this uncertain, unsettled, and unintelligible Creed?

(ε.) Its Doctrinal Statements.

(1.) *The Athanasian Creed Incomprehensible.*

"Understandest thou what thou readest?"

To believe without knowledge, to believe we know not what, is surely the same as believing nothing, or not believing at all. And to recite a profession of belief without believing it, is surely foolish; whilst so to recite it *to God* is blasphemy.

Were I to say a thousand times, at the bidding of my teachers, "I believe that Abracadabra is Chrononhotonthologos"; nay, were I to strive with all my might and main to believe it, I could not believe it, if "belief" means anything. To believe a proposition is to connect one idea with another; to believe that "Snow is white" is to put the idea of whiteness along with the idea of snow. But a proposition which calls up no ideas is absolutely incapable of being the subject-matter of belief at all. If we know not what its words mean, how can we believe it? We may *say* we believe it, or we may believe that we *shall* believe it, as soon as ever we shall learn what it means; but to *believe* it as things are is, from the very nature of belief, impossible.

The most that we can really believe about it is to believe that the words have some sense, unknown to us, in which they convey, to those who know that sense, some truth (unknown to us). In short, we are at best in the same state of mind as when we have heard some friend, of undoubted truthfulness, solemnly uttering a sentence in Sanscrit.

But what possible influence can this have on our conduct, or how can it possibly concern our future salvation?

Now this leads us up to two further objections to the *Quicunque*. (I.) That it says more than man can ever know. (II.) That even this it says *misleadingly*. In other words, its statements relate to matters beyond our comprehension; and its words give us, in the present day, ideas about those matters quite opposed to the ideas of its author. Now to establish this.

We need spend no time in proving that its statements are incomprehensible to man; for what man will dare to say that he comprehends them? "Our soundest knowledge," says Hooker, "is to know that we know not God as indeed He is, neither can know Him;" such knowledge is too wonderful for us, too high, we cannot attain unto it. The "substance," the "Person," of my Infinite Creator, how He was "begotten," or how He "proceeded," how can I understand them, or what can I know about them?* Yet when I understand not and know not, I cannot—from the very nature of belief—I cannot *believe*.

Nor, loudly as the claim may be made by designing or by unthinking men, is there anything here to call for the "prostration of my understanding," the "submission of my reason." There are no grounds why I should reverence the words of the *Quicunque* if they seem mean-

* "Who can pretend to that exactness of thought on this subject [the Trinity] on which our technical language is based?"—Bishop Hampden's *Bampton Lectures*, p. 150. We do not know how "being begotten" and "proceeding" differ in the case of Deity, or what either of them is. Yet we are damned if we do not distinguish where there is no distinction!

ingless to me, or should be anxious to believe that there *is* some unknown meaning in which, in an unknown way, they are true. Such an attitude would indeed befit me in the presence of a divine revelation; but the Psalm *Quicunque* is not a divine revelation. Its author was not infallible, and, consequently, its doctrines may be wrong. It is no part of the Bible; nay, it has not even been sheltered by the infallibility of any pope or any council. No pope or council has authoritatively sanctioned it; and one universally accepted council has, by anticipation, condemned it. It is the work of a private author—an unknown author—an author of whose piety, whose learning, or whose experience we have no attestation whatever; and whose piety has doubtless been equalled, whilst his learning and experience must necessarily have been surpassed, by many saintly men of later times who have scrupled or rejected his handiwork.

(2.) *It leads to Heresy.*

The misleading character of its language calls for a brief comment. We have said that man's finite mind is incapable of forming a *true* idea of many things mentioned in the *Quicunque*. We now add that its words suggest to a reader in the present day ideas that are admittedly *false*.* They do not merely leave

* This is gently put in the defence of the Creed recently issued by the Christian Knowledge Society: "The Creed contains terms, such as 'incomprehensible,' 'confusion of substance,' 'unity of person,' which require some little (!) knowledge of the elements of theology before they can be rightly applied. . . . I am supposing that we *think* of what we say in solemn worship, that we endeavour to gain . . . .a notion of the meaning of the words we use."—SADLER'S *Argument for the Athanasian Creed*, p. 4. Such a defence reads more like a condemnation!

him in ignorance, they lead him into heresy. They are equivocal and ambiguous; and their natural *modern* signification is not that intended by the Creed. So they become paths into heterodoxy instead of barriers against it.

Take a single instance. The word *person* originally had one meaning in theology, then acquired an exactly opposite one (in which latter it is used in the *Quicunque*), and now has a third, wholly dissimilar from the other two. Thus the (original) Nicene Creed anathematized all who held that the Son's "person" (hypostasis) *is* different from the Father's; whilst the *Quicunque* anathematizes all who hold that it *is not* different! (It does not matter that men differ in words if they agree in ideas; but here, unhappily, one has no idea at all!) It would not be fair to treat this as a contradiction; it is merely a proof how utterly the word had changed its meaning (though whenever opposite phrases equally express a doctrine, that doctrine must be a strange one). It has now undergone a further change (as witness the modern phrase, "the *personality* of God"); and when an ordinary Englishman repeats the *Quicunque*, and speaks of "three persons," he attaches the accustomed contemporary meaning to the word, and concludes that there are three reasoning beings, three minds, three individual spiritual existences. But, unhappily, the idea which the *Quicunque* thus inevitably instils into him is one which brings him under its own anathemas, and which the University of Oxford, by solemn decree, declared in 1695 to be "false, impious, and heretical."

Space forbids us to linger on this topic; as we might point out that the word "substance" carries to ordinary

readers no idea but that of matter, and brings them directly to the heresy of the *corporeality* of God. We might dwell, too, on the fact that its doctrine of the absolute *equality* of the three persons is irreconcilable with the orthodox view of the "Monarchia" of the Father and subordination of the Son, which Bishop Bull has demonstrated with learning so unparalleled.* Or that its single "illustrative" verse, if pressed to its consequences, would, by the admission of Bishop Moberley, "become entirely heretical."†

But we have said enough to show that if right ideas of the Trinity *were* essential to salvation, those suggested by the *Quicunque* would so often be *not* right, that we should be tempted to adapt Mr. Binney's phrase, and exclaim, "The Athanasian Creed damns more souls than it saves."

It has been gravely proposed to recite the Creed in the original Latin!—as being not more unintelligible, and far less misleading.

* "The Athanasian Creed is in my judgment *heretical*, in the omission or implicit denial of that filial subordination in the Godhead which is the doctrine of the Nicene Creed, and for which Waterland and Bull have so fervently and triumphantly contended. . . . . This creed is also tautological, and if not persecuting (which I will not discuss), certainly contains harsh and ill-conceived language."—Coleridge, *Table Talk*, i. 78.

† *Sermon* of July 21st, 1872: "If pressed further than that single point of likeness for which it is adduced, it runs directly into monothelite and monophysite error." "It seems to me quite out of place in a creed." Yet a writer in the *Harleian Miscellany* singled out this verse as "The only offer at sense that is to be found in this whole Creed."

(3.) *It repels untrained Hearers.*

It is not within the province of this Essay to consider the truth or falsehood of the Athanasian doctrine. I have neither time nor space nor ability to discuss here so vast a question as the inquiry how far the expositions of the *Quicunque* accurately represent either the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity or the views of the early Church regarding the Person of Christ.

But apart from these thorny and irritating questions, there remains another far more akin to the purposes of our Essay, which does admit of a brief and conclusive answer. It is not, "Is the *Quicunque* a *true* exposition?" but "Is it, as now used, an *appropriate* one?" Admitting its doctrinal soundness, is it so judiciously couched as to be fit for indiscriminate congregational use? Does it state its mysterious topics in a form likely to commend them to the mind of the disciple? Or does it, on the other hand, select propositions so sweeping or so startling, language so ambiguous or so recondite, as to be likely only to bewilder or repel? Does it, in fact, as Pitt said of Butler's Analogy, "raise more doubts than it settles"?

Surely any plain and honest man, who reads through the Creed, can return but one answer to this question. The more heartily he accepts all the doctrines of the Church, the more will he regret to see them stated in so unfortunate a manner, and pushed into minute particulars of speculative nicety.

(*a.*) Admitting the vast influence which our beliefs

have on our practice, and consequently on our hereafter, he will yet hold, with Micah, that what is "before *all* things necessary" to everlasting salvation is "To do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God." He will remember that by this path passed to Abraham's bosom patriarchs, prophets, and psalmists to whom it was never given to hear of (much less to keep whole and undefiled) the Catholic Faith.

(*b.*) He will pause again at the long chain of arithmetical verses: "There is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. . . . The Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet they are not three Lords but one Lord." In the Scripture doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—nay, in the English Church's teachings in her Litany and Catechism—these paradoxes were never propounded to him. Grant that these are compatible with the simpler statements, or even that they are demonstrable deductions from them, the objection still remains—Why embarrass the clear proposition by tacking to it the puzzling corollary?

There are three Divine persons, but not three Gods. Yet he will ask, What is a Person but a Being—what a Divine Person but a Divine Being—what a Divine Being but a God? There are three distinct Persons—so distinct that each can separately *act* and separately *will*, in a way in which the others do not will or act; so distinct, too, that to consider them as not distinct is a sin punished by eternal damnation;—and each of these three distinct Persons taken by himself is God. And yet there are not three Gods! All this would remain meaningless, though a thousand volumes were written to prove it intelligible. These paradoxes appalled even so

eminent a philosopher, so devout and skilful an advocate of Christianity, as the author of the "Ninth Bridgewater Treatise." Mr. Babbage says ("Passages in the life of a Philosopher," p. 403): "The Athanasian Creed is a direct contradiction in terms. If three things can be one thing, then the whole science of arithmetic is at once annihilated, and the laws of astronomy are dreams. If, on the other hand, it is attempted to show that there may be some mystic sense in which three and one are the same thing, then language becomes useless, for it contradicts itself and is untrue."

As the reader passes on to the *Quicunque's* own summary of those arithmetical verses, he will fear that the dilemma it sets forth can mean only this—that "the Catholic religion forbids us to say" what "the Christian verity compels us to acknowledge!"

(*c.*) Again, when he reads that one of these co-equal and co-eternal persons is of the substance of another who begot him, he will reflect that what is begotten must have a begetter, and there must have been a time when this begetter acted and produced the begotten. In other words there must have been a time when the begotten began to be. Yet this irresistible consequence is directly excluded by the language of the *Quicunque!*

(*d.*) Next he reads on that "as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man," so God and man united in Christ are but one person. Such an illustration is likely to seem to him fatal rather than illustrative. True, each individual man has, in his single person, both a soul and body. But he has only one memory, one reason, one will; and it is just this oneness of will, reason,

and memory, that makes him an individual. If he *had* more, he would *be* more; each new will would be a new person. Now in the Incarnate Christ there are two wills, two minds, two memories, as all theologians admit when they assert that Christ, "as man," knew not that hour of judgment which himself, "as God," had appointed. Now if, on the *Quicunque's* own illustration, two reasonable human souls make *two* persons, must not one reasonable human soul and another reasonable Divine soul make *two* persons still more evidently?

But it is useless to count all the embarrassments that will beset our pilgrim in his attempt to recognize Scripture doctrines when disguised in language and form which are not the form and language of Scripture. Perhaps not one proposition of the *Quicunque* will seem wholly familiar to his heart till he comes to its forewarning of the righteous judgment. And here the purely *moral* character of the test, the judgment according to works, the life everlasting accorded to all "that have *done good*," is a Scriptural teaching, strangely at variance with the preceding clauses that made '*right belief, whole and undefiled*,' a primary condition of everlasting life!

Perhaps a theologian will reply, that all these objections are invalid, that by adequate study a sense may be given to the words of the *Quicunque*, a turn be devised for its propositions, that would lay to rest all these difficulties. Be it so: this very reply admits all that we are contending for. If its words are "technicalities of our science," keep them for the scientific. I have not asserted that the belief of the pseudo-Athanasius was unsound; or that the *doctrinal* objections to the *Quicunque* are valid. But I do maintain that those objections are so numer-

ous, so obvious, so inevitable, so plausible, so embarrassing, as utterly to unfit this Creed for public use in congregational prayer. Its enigmas may present no difficulty to theologians in the study or the schools. But when plain people are praying to God, it is an ill time for puzzling them with riddles.

III.

Results.

Such, then, are the grave objections to the present congregational use of the *Quicunque*, calling, beyond refusal, for the immediate disuse of the damnatory clauses; calling, too, with an emphasis little inferior, for the entire omission of this Creed from our *public* devotions.

The objections cannot be, are not, denied. What is pleaded against the change? Practically but two things. The first is the appeal to the wisdom of antiquity; as if the Christians of the present day were not in possession of the stores of that wisdom, enlarged by all the experience of the subsequent centuries; as if the path of the Christian Church were not, like the path of the individual Christian, by God's good Spirit hourly brightened more and more into the perfect day. The second is the appeal—"Do not rob us of our Catholic heritage!"—an appeal pressed most strongly by those who have least studied the Creed's claims to Catholicity. How slight those claims are we have shown.*

* The Rev. B. W. Savile, says (p. 16): "In 1662, for the first time in the history of any branch of Christ's Church, the *Quicunque* was ordered to *supplant* the Apostles' Creed. It betrays an extra-

"To surrender our private judgment to our Church," said the Rev. Professor Jellett, in the recent debate on the *Quicunque* in the Irish Synod, "may be very decorous, very modest, to some minds very palatable, but it is not the genius of the Protestant religion."

What should fetter us in dealing as the wisdom of good men may in any way lead us to deal with the *Quicunque*? It shares the fallibility of all human compositions. It is human, not revealed; though ancient, it is not apostolical; it is œcumenical in no sense of the word, for it was unknown to the Church at large for five, if not for nine, centuries.

If the plea be urged:* "We ought not to alter a document accepted (even though not *publicly* used) by other churches, except by concert with them," that plea only affects the proposal to *excise* the damnatory clauses. Even admitting its validity, it is no argument against the course which we far prefer—the entire disuse of the Creed in public prayers. Such disuse tampers with no document; it is a mere exercise of a right which all admit our Church to possess and to have repeatedly exercised. What the Church has built, the same Church, guided by the same Spirit, can alter. A step towards it has indeed been lately taken with general assent. For the recent Act of Uniformity Amendment Act allows omission of the *Quicunque* on *eight* of the thirteen appointed days—a clear

ordinary forgetfulness of Church history for certain of the clergy to talk about being deprived of their 'Catholic heritage,' or threatening to secede if the rubric for its compulsory recital be repealed, and we be permitted to regain the freedom which our forefathers for more than fifteen centuries enjoyed."

* So Bishop Moberley proposes a Pan-Anglican synod for the purpose.

precedent for the Church's power to omit it. The defect is, that this Act does not extend to Sunday and Christmas-day services—the times when the grievance is most felt, because the times when congregations are most numerous and most mixed. Moreover, these Christmas and Easter services are the times when these curses and these arid subtleties are most jarring to the listener; marring the kindly charities of the season, and the devout thankfulness of Christian worshippers. Then, if ever, do we desire a worship that shall be all sunshine.

"It is," reported the three Divinity Professors of Cambridge in 1872, "it is the office of the Church to make such changes in the forms of words by which the faith is commended to believers as may be required for their edification and for the right understanding of her own meaning."

The change proposed can damage no Church except the Unitarian; some of whose members may quit her, on finding the chief stumbling-block to conformity removed.

Nor would our *worship* lose anything by the omission. The *Quicunque* has not even the recommendation of being a remembrancer of our principal religious blessings; it does not sweep the circle of Christian faith, it is silent on all themes affecting the religious life; it almost ignores the Atonement, it knows nothing of the Sacraments, nothing of the intercession, nothing even of a sanctifying Spirit. Nay, it is not even an effectual guard of orthodoxy; it offers no guidance in any of the controversies of our day, not a word on inspiration, on miracles, on prayer, on the personality of God. It is wholly occupied with doctrinal subtleties that have been for ages without

interest; for, as Mr. Gladstone said at Liverpool, "well-nigh 1,500 years have passed away since the great controversies concerning the Redeemer's deity and person were after a long agony determined."

We seek, then, at least the *option* of disusing this Creed; but it is undesirable to allow any option in the matter, and so permit such a document as this to be enforced upon an unwilling minority, or (supposing the option vested not in the congregation, but in the bishop, the incumbent, or the churchwardens), still worse, upon an unwilling majority.

Thus disused, it will nevertheless remain incorporated in the Articles as a portion of the faith to which the clergy —who alone are competent to deal with it—assent; and may keep its place with those Articles in our prayer-books. Is it said that this would dishonour the Creed? Surely not, for it does not dishonour the Articles to treat them thus; and they, the known work of men of known goodness, are worthy of higher honour than is the *Quicunque*. If this dishonours the Creed, how cruelly does the existing rubric dishonour the ancient and Catholic *Apostles' Creed*, silencing it in favour of the questionable *Quicunque* thirteen times a year. How cruelly, too, must the Bishop of Lincoln have "dishonoured" the Nicene Creed when he actually excised a clause from it on the day when Archbishop Lycurgus came to his cathedral!

Our Reformers must have felt that the Creed was ill-suited to mixed congregations when they restricted its use to one service in *fifty-six*.* Had they restricted it to

* The case is really still stronger, for in 1549 they reduced the Creed from daily Prime to *six* recitations a year; these in 1552 were raised to thirteen.

colleges and cathedrals, the restriction would have been still more consistent.

"The Bible," said one of the greatest divines of the Church of England, in words that have so seized upon the hearts of Englishmen as to have become a household phrase, "the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants." "Holy Scripture," says the English Church in her Sixth Article, "contains all things necessary to salvation, so that what is not read therein nor may be proved thereby is not to be required of any man." Now, even if we admit that the Athanasian doctrine can by a minute chain of reasoning be so proved, it still is, at best, but a more elaborate and subtle statement of the same faith that is confessed in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds; and it is hard to see what good end can be answered by setting before ordinary congregations a metaphysical and comparatively modern exposition of those ancient Creeds, and demanding their assent to it on pain of damnation.

Not satisfied with teaching them the Incarnation, and the Deity of the Son and Holy Ghost, we go on to tell them that in believing the latter doctrine they must take heed neither to "confound the Persons" nor to "divide the Substance;" and that they must realize the former one as involving, not, indeed, a "confusion of Substance," but certainly a "unity of Person;" and in telling them so we are fully aware that they will either set no meaning at all upon the words thus put in their mouths, or will set one which (from the difference between the ancient and modern senses of words) is not only false but heretical. What must the damnatory clauses make any poor Christian think of his own hopes of heaven when he reflects how little he can be said really to *believe* about

these dark questions! "The Athanasian Creed," said the Bishop of Labuan, in the Convocation debates on it of 1872, "is very difficult to translate into a new language. So for years I contented myself with translating into Malay the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds." And we have already seen that there is one clause in it which even the Six Bishops could not reproduce in English. Are the plain people who speak only English, or Malay, or any simpler tongue, to be damned because their language is not subtle enough to reproduce these hieroglyphics? If the Creed is not intelligible it cannot be edifying. If the great majority who recite it have no notion what they are saying, what avails their reciting it? Is learning what we can not understand any better than peering for what is invisible? "I had rather speak five words with understanding than ten thousand in an unknown tongue," says St. Paul. And the Church of England bids public prayer be in a tongue "understanded of the people." In how many churches is the Athanasian phrascology rightly understanded by either the people or the pastor? And even were the Creed intelligible, is it so important as to claim public repetition? Are its minute and critical definitions really essential to salvation? If so, why is it not repeated at *every* service, that no Christian soul may perish for lack of knowledge? At present a man may go to church fifty Sundays in the fifty-two without ever being warned of the awful peril of "dividing the Substance."

Is the present a time when the National Church can afford to retain in her Morning Prayer a form that in a greater or less degree is universally unacceptable to her lay members? At a time when her position of Establish-

ment is assailed by a growing political party; when she numbers in her ranks less than two-fifths of the population;* when her enemies are girding themselves resolutely to the final onset; can she afford to alienate adherents or to damp their sympathies? Do not the times imperatively call on her to be true to herself, true to her old policy of scriptural worship, of tolerant feeling, of national inclusiveness? Should she not lay aside every stumbling-block that deters from her worship or her ministry those who are one with her in heart; and "make even paths for her feet," lest tender consciences be turned out of the way?

Let her free herself, then, from the Mezentian load of the *Quicunque*, and no longer mar the worship of God with fulminations of the wrath of man. To do this she requires the aid of Parliament, but no one doubts that that aid would readily be given. The "Political Services," which had only a Royal sanction, needed only a Royal authority for their disuse. But the Athanasian Creed is a part of the Prayer-book proper; the rubric for its use is part of the schedule to an Act of Parliament; and the three estates of the realm must unite with the Crown to repeal a single line of the Act of Uniformity. A change so widely acceptable, and so closely affecting the interests of the Church, can most fitly be brought before the earthly head of the English Church by an address from her House of Commons, praying that she will advise with her Cabinet on this matter. The reform desired is no party question, but it deserves to be brought

* Even the late brilliant Bampton Lecturer on *Dissent* only claimed for the Church of England ·355 of the population of England and Wales.

forward with ministerial authority and by ministerial facilities; and from no ministry could it come more appropriately than from one which, like Mr. Disraeli's, has formally accepted it as its special function to keep the Church of England *thoroughly Protestant and thoroughly National.*

IV.

It remains but to exhibit a condensed view of our reasons. We desire to see the laity released from the necessity of using the Athanasian Creed in public prayer; and this for the following reasons:—

1. Because it states the solemn Scripture doctrine of a Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in language which embarrasses those who believe it, and affords matter for banter and sarcasm to those who reject it.

2. Because it is so worded that all laymen misunderstand its language (unless they have received a training in theological terminology even more minute than that given to the great body of the clergy), and are led by it into ideas tending to the heresies of Tritheism, of Sabellianism, or of the corporeality of God. Scripture language best suits Scripture doctrine.

3. Because no creeds ought to be employed in general and public worship that are not level to the general understanding. Our Church service is not meant only for philosophers, metaphysicians, and divines. "Where mystery begins, religion ends." It is certainly more profitable to hear in church what we do understand than what we do not.

4. Because the Creed requires the same degree of belief, and threatens the same penalties for disbelief, in the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity, as in the inferences which the author draws from it, and by which he "explains" it: whereas a human explanation or discussion of a Scripture doctrine must be both of inferior evidence, and of inferior authority, to the doctrine itself.

5. Because the intolerant damnatory clauses which occur at the beginning, middle, and end of the Creed are unwarranted by Scripture, and are defended by their supporters only on the allegation that they admit of humane interpretations; about which those supporters are themselves disagreed, and all which are utterly unknown to nine hundred and ninety-nine in every thousand who repeat these clauses.

6. Because the only Creed confessed by the Christians of the Apostolic age (by Martha, John xi. 27; by St. Peter, Matt. xvi. 16; by the Eunuch, Acts viii. 37) was "That Jesus Christ is the Son of God." A Creed which commends itself at once to all Christian worshippers everywhere and at all times.

7. Because the Church of England has expressed her doctrine of the Trinity in her Litany and Catechism in a more clear and persuasive manner.

8. Because the only Creed into which the Church of England (or any other Church) baptizes, which she requires as a condition of absolution, which she requires to be taught by sponsors, which she re-exacts in confirmation, is the Apostles' Creed.

9. Because it is not known when, or by whom, or in what shape, the *Quicunque* was originally written.

10. Because all other Christian Churches regard it as unsuited for congregational use.

Or, in a word, Because the Quicunque is an intolerant and unscriptural Creed, relating to inscrutable subjects, and couched in a form sedulously paradoxical and unintelligible; defining what is indefinable, and intruding controversies into a devotional service.

FINIS.

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